

# *Prunus persica*

Rosaceae

## South-West Asia, China

**Am:** *Kock*

**Eng:** *Peach*

**Gr:** *Kock*

**Or:** *Kocki*

**Sd:** *Kocki*

**Tg:** *Kock*

## Ecology

A small fruit tree of temperate climates, widely planted in the highlands and in home gardens in Moist and Wet Weyna Dega agroclimatic zones, 1,700–2,400 m. It will grow at quite dry sites.

## Uses

Firewood, food (fruit).

## Description

A deciduous spreading tree to 6 m, but normally pruned in cultivation. **BARK:** Grey-brown, splitting; young twigs angular, smooth and red. **LEAVES:** Narrowly oval, 5–15 cm long, the edge finely toothed, dull green, paler below with a raised midrib, shortly stalked. **FLOWERS:** Blossom on the bare tree, flowers deep pink to 4 cm across, usually single, 5 petals around the central stamens. Flowers grow on small side branches which later take the weight of the tree's fruit. **FRUIT:** Round and fleshy to 8 cm across, usually smaller, yellow-red and carved with short hairs which rub off. Inside a hard pitted stone contains the single seed.

## Propagation

Seedlings. Grafting to maintain tree variety and quality.

## Seed

No seed treatment needed.

## Management

Prune regularly. The preferred tree shape is a canopy with an open centre and good light distribution. Cut the young tree to about 50 cm, retaining 2–4 laterals to become the main supporting (scaffold) branches. As the distance between these branches widens higher up, allows the branches to fork.

As peach flowers on shoots formed in the previous season, the number of shoots in mature trees must be pruned to 25–40 cm to stabilize and maintain moderate shoot vigour and to ensure shoots are not borne ever further away from the main support branches.

The main formative pruning should be done at the start of the crop cycle. If necessary, prune again while the fruit is on the tree. Ensure that light is distributed evenly in the canopy since partly shaded shoots tend to flower on the exposed side only in the next season. The fruiting cycle of inferior cultivars may be induced by a cool, overcast season; defoliate the best varieties for a good start to a new crop cycle. Clean-cultivate orchards and mulch under the trees. During the rainy season, slash weeds or grow a cover crop. Irrigation is desirable and a must if crop cycles are to be shortened.

## Remarks

It is severely affected by peach leaf curl. Even with modest management, it produces large quantities of small, rather hard fruits that are eaten raw and popular.





Photo: Patrick Maundu

